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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program designed to promote the use of recorded observations in Child Development Associate (CDA) advisors' assessments of interns in early childhood education at a southwestern community college. Sixty-one advisors participated in the program, which consisted of a series of five staff development meetings, formulation of a new lesson plan to be included in pre-service orientation, and revision of a segment of the advisor handbook. Surveys of advisors' experience with competency-based assessment, review of advisors' reports, and an on-going Context Input Process Product (CIPP) evaluation were used in formulating the training program. Results of the program indicated that the advisors increased their use of competency-based recorded observation in meetings with interns and participated enthusiastically in the staff development meetings, and that the design of the meetings successfully promoted reflective discussion among participants. The program also prompted discussion among participants over whether the purpose of recorded observations was to provide encouragement or assess competence. Six appendixes contain the CDA advisor survey instrument as well as samples of program materials. Contains 31 references. (ME)

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ED 367 506

Increasing Community College Child Development Associate (CDA) Advisor Skills in Recording Observations as a Component of a Competency-Based Assessment

By

Linda Lee Arzoumanian

Cluster 41

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described

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This practicum report was submitted by Linda Arzoumanian under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

24 January 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

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A project covering nearly an entire state and taking almost a year to finish requires the collaboration and integrity of many people to complete. May this be a special thanks to all who contributed in terms of time, energy, reflection and friendship.

Cheryl L. Foster (CDA Training Manager) provided a source of enthusiasm and encouragement as we delved into the intimacy of the training program. Her support in terms of energy, time, and good spirit exemplifies the early childhood professional

Special mention must be made of the family. To Youri, who suffered through the downsizing of a large corporation and took a job in another state while I completed the project, goes a large debt of gratitude. Aaron and Stephan each contributed in their own unique way, working around strange schedules and learning to take responsibilities in areas they had not thought possible so that I could get the project completed. Another note of thanks to my mother, Rosemary Engstrom, and her wonderful husband Ray, for always being just a telephone call away for loving care and positive attitudes.

A most heartfelt note of gratitude to those who have walked before me--my grandmother and my great aunts. Even as they believed and modeled life-long learning and a woman's rights, may I model the same philosophy for future generations.

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ABSTRACT

Staff Development for Community College Child Development Associate (CDA) Advisors: Increased Skills in the Use of Recorded Observations as a Component of Competency-Based Assessment. Arzoumanian, Linda. L., 1994. Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Staff development/ community college/ Childhood Development Associate/ CDA/ CDA advisors/ observations/ competency-based assessment/ performance-based assessment.

This practicum was designed to increase the skills of Childhood Development Associate (CDA) advisors in the recording of the competencies of interns (community college students) in an early childhood education program. The goals for the practicum were for CDA advisors to become familiar with recorded observations as a component of competency-based assessment, to increase the knowledge of observation techniques, and to become familiar with performance-based assessment.

Staff development for active CDA advisors was designed and presented throughout the state. A model lesson plan utilizing current staff development theory was designed and implemented for the orientation of potential CDA advisors. A revision to the community college's CDA advisor handbook was written. The intern (student) contract was evaluated for possible revision.

An evaluation using the CIPP process of reviewing context, input, product and process revealed positive feedback from participants regarding the staff development format and the preservice orientation. All potential CDA advisors will have a preservice orientation regarding recorded observations and competency-based assessment. All CDA advisors will utilize recorded observations to indicate the competency of the student on the intern contract.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

In 1974 a community college-based program to provide Child Development Associate (CDA) training was begun in this southwestern state. The intent was to provide a competency-based training program for early childhood caregivers. The program was designed for a diverse population of students ranging from child care providers in private homes to public school paraprofessionals. Early childhood professionals were designated to deliver the training. The professionals were subsequently given the title of advisor. The students were given the title of intern. Funding for the development of the program was provided by the federal government. Current funding is provided by tuition fees, state educational funds, and grant money.

In 1992-93 the program employed 61 actively participating advisors. The advisors lived and worked in

28 communities served by the community college training program. The communities varied from very large metropolitan areas to isolated, tiny, rural communities. The varying elevations of these communities presented an environmental range from total desert to alpine mountain.

The populations of the communities varied almost as much as the elevations. Service was provided to totally Native American populations as well as Hispanic, African-American and Anglo populations. A large percentage of the communities had a blend of cultures.

Advisors provided one-to-one direct contact with the students (interns). Interns worked in a wide variety of child care settings. These settings included public school early childhood classrooms, public school preschool programs for at-risk students, full day kindergarten programs, home visitation programs under the auspices of a public school setting, Head Start classrooms, Head Start home visitation programs, group child care facilities, corporate child care centers, group home child care with multiple providers in one setting, church-related preschool programs, programs provided for children in church facilities but not church-related, family child care with one provider, and grant-funded short term programs.

The educational level of the interns varied from the general education degree (GED) through college degrees. Several of the interns were working toward the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential provided under the auspices of the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition. Many public school interns were working toward the completion of units of study required by a school district for staff development and increment credit. Interns were also completing the required 30 credits of early childhood education for a community college certificate in early childhood education. Some interns had acknowledged a goal to complete an associate degree in early childhood education. Other interns had established a goal to enroll in a local university to complete a degree in elementary education.

Advisors and interns presented a very diverse population. The advisors were adjunct instructors of the community college. As adjunct instructors, they were certificated to teach early childhood education and child development at the community college level. Many of the advisors had taken a required course in community college education. These advisors had received a lifetime community college teaching certificate issued by the State Board for Directors of Community Colleges.

Most advisors initially obtained orientation at the centrally-located community college during an intense single day preservice provided by the training program. During the school year, the training program provided advisor inservice via seminars on a regular or irregular basis. The two larger cities scheduled monthly meetings, but the smaller communities were reached on an "as needed" basis for advisor inservice. Inservice meetings held for the total advisor group were held once each year since the writer had become involved with the program.

Professional resources were provided by the college for the advisors to use with the interns. The resources were books, periodicals, videos and slides. Resource materials were available by mail or by having the materials brought by the training manager to an advisor meeting.

Writer's Role and Responsibility

The role of the writer as a CDA advisor and early childhood education consultant involved working with interns and public school teachers in a variety of settings. The role of advisor required working with individual interns, attending monthly advisor group meetings and gathering information for the presentation of a monthly report to the community college training

program. The role of educational consultant involved providing support to the Chapter I and K-3 staff in curriculum development, assessment, and staff development.

In 1988 the Chapter I early childhood project specialist asked the writer to consider developing a program of staff development for teaching assistants in the early childhood classrooms. After reviewing a series of alternatives, it was determined that the competency-based CDA program provided by the community college was the best alternative. The writer received training in August 1990 to become a CDA advisor.

The CDA training program for teaching assistants was piloted in the fall of the 1990-91 school year with five teaching assistants funded by Pell grants. The first year the writer became a CDA advisor for 17 teaching assistants. The program grew to include 61 teaching assistants in four different settings in the public school system. These four settings were a home visitation program for three year old children and their parents, a Chapter I preschool program, a preschool program for students considered at-risk, and a full day kindergarten program.

The writer participated as an advisor to interns in a community-based program at a YMCA. The writer provided

on-site training to interns in management of early childhood programs.

As a consultant in early childhood education, the writer provided a variety of large group inservices in the content area of early childhood education. Many of the inservices were designed to support the alternative assessment program in the Chapter I early childhood project. The inservices were focused on the developing observation skills and narrative writing skills by the teaching staff.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

CDA advisors were required to record and to share observations of the intern competencies while having little or no training in observation techniques, competency-based assessment, or performance-based assessment. The training program recommended that each CDA advisor observe and conference with each CDA intern (student) at least twice for every credit of early childhood education to be earned by the CDA intern. Each visit by the advisor to the intern was documented in triplicate on an individual intern contract form that required a written observation (see Appendix A).

It is traditional practice to receive course grades for college credit. The designation of a letter grade, essential for establishing college credit and grade point averages, provided little indication of competency. The recording of observations by advisors added a

performance-based assessment for the competency-based program.

The CDA advisor was challenged to indicate proof of competency for the college course work. The program required observation and conference time. Conference time was frequently used for discussion of course work objectives, future assignments and conferring of grades. During the conference time interns might bring evidence of activities related to the course objectives including lesson plans, letters to parents, hand-made games and toys, the work of their students, reading material, field trip plans and other indicators of competent performance.

Interns who received individualized instruction read and reread the written contract as a clue to their performance as indicated by the written observation. The college training program reviewed the contracts as an indication of the level of competency being obtained by the intern. There had been brief discussion connecting advisor observation to intern competency and no guided practice in the techniques of observations.

Descriptions of performance based assessment reveal the challenge facing those using this method of evaluation. Performance-based assessment, according to Herman, Ashbacher, and Winters (1992), involves the active engagement of learners in accomplishing a "complex

and significant..." task (p. 2). These authors assert that learners bring "...prior knowledge, recent learning and relevant skills..." to the problem solving process (p. 2). Zessoules and Gardner (1991) suggest the need to document "multiple dimensions" of learning (p. 59). CDA interns often shared many facets of learning during the meeting with CDA advisors. The advisors had not received staff development from the college regarding the engagement of learners in the process of learning or in the multiple dimensions of learning.

CDA advisors were expected to complete each intern contract with a recorded observation but many CDA intern contracts were being submitted without recorded observations. There was a discrepancy between what was expected and what was being submitted to the training program in terms of the intern contract. CDA advisors had not been provided with sufficient competency-based staff development sessions to enhance use of observation skills and techniques for recording the competency of an intern.

Problem Documentation

The problem was documented by (a) review of intern contracts by the CDA training program manager, (b) a discussion with advisors at a regional staff meeting, (c)

an interview with the CDA training manager, and (d) personal experience as a CDA advisor.

Each month CDA advisors were required to submit a report packet that included a portion of the triplicate intern contracts. The CDA program manager reviewed these contract forms to look for completeness and for the number of personal contacts made with the CDA interns. The writer was told that during an overview of the 1991-92 school year, it was estimated that less than 2,000 of the 6,000 contracts received by the program had recorded observations.

In September 1992, during a staff development meeting in one of the large metropolitan areas, the CDA advisors were shown samples of contracts that had recorded observations and those which had no recorded observations. The emphasis during the meeting was for the CDA advisors to understand the importance of recorded observations as a vital component of the competency-based program. At that time several CDA advisors requested more information regarding training to do competency-based observations.

The writer had received a special preservice orientation to facilitate entry into the advisor program during the summer of 1990. No specific emphasis on observation skills was included during the orientation.

There had been no discussion regarding competencies per se, only discussion regarding objectives related to the course work. Although it was intended that all new CDA advisors would receive a preservice training, it later appeared that approximately 30 advisors of the active cadre had not received preservice training specific to observation skills and techniques as a part of competency-based assessment.

The writer is an early childhood educator and CDA advisor and had acted as a member of the local assessment teams for the national Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialling process. These experiences had not provided the writer with the skill and confidence to successfully utilize observations as an assessment component in a competency-based program.

Causative Analysis

It was the writer's belief that there were five reasons for the problem: (1) physical distance covered by the training program limited communication, (2) limited resources for staff development, (3) increased emphasis on the recording of observations, (4) use of observations as a component of performance-based assessment, and (5) personal lack ofknowledge and confidence in utilizing performance-based assessment.

These five components impacted the foundation on which the competency-based program was grounded.

The physical distance covered by the training program was vast. Advisors were located throughout nine counties in one of the largest states in the nation. The state has 15 counties, nine of which are in the service area for this particular community college. All of the advisors were under the auspices of the CDA training program provided by the community college.

Except for preservice orientation, it was very difficult to provide staff development for a cadre of advisors spread over hundreds of miles. The distance that separated the community college from the advisors often required four hours of driving time or a short (but expensive) flight.

There were limited resources for staff development. During the past four years, staff development had been funded by the State Department of Health Services Office of Child Care Licensure and the community college training program. The two agencies collaborated to utilize grant money to provide staff development. Nearly 200 people employed in public health or as CDA advisors attended the program for two days in January 1993. The program was held at a conference facility central to

advisors and health care providers. Emphasis was focused on health and safety in child care settings.

Trained advisors provided health and safety education in licensed child care settings in various counties. These courses were mandated for child care providers in the state. Advisors who provided this training needed to be familiar with current rules and regulations in child care settings. The grant-funded staff development program was considered the only required meeting for CDA advisors during the year.

Staff development for advisors emphasizing observations techniques had not been provided except at preservice orientation for CDA advisors. Increased emphasis on the use of observations as a form of assessment had been evidenced at the beginning of the 1992-93 school year. The manager of the CDA advisor program brought samples of contracts to share with advisors. Discussion was held as to what was considered a well-written contract or a not-so-well-written contract. Emphasis was placed on the recording of observations by advisors. The emphasis accentuated the need for staff development in the area of observations and performance-based assessment.

Advisors entered the program throughout the school year. The CDA training program had not had

competency-based assessment as a topic of preserivce orientation or inservice for advisors. Discussion had not been held with CDA advisors regarding the need for using observations as a tool in performance-based assessment although the program is a competency-based program. Advisors had not held formal or informal discussions regarding current literature on performance-based assessment and its implication for the competency-based program.

The writer did not feel confident in the recording of observations of adults in competency-based programs. Personal experiences as an early childhood educator, a CDA advisor, and as a member of local assessment teams for the national Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialling process had not prepared the writer for the process of utilizing performance-based assessment and recording it on a contract form. A deepening sense of frustration abounded when, after observing an intern for half an hour, the writer was still not certain of what to record on the contract to show that the intern was competent in the particular area of study.

Relationship of the Problem to Literature

Increasingly evaluation practice has expanded the emphasis on the use of observations in assessment paralleded by decreased reliance on standardized testing. The definition of assessment by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in 1991 includes, "...observing and recording and otherwise documenting ..." behavior (p. 21).

Boehm and Weinburg (1987), in the preface of The Classroom Observer, refer to observations as an "indispensable component" in the encyclopedia of an early childhood educator (p. xiii). Chittendon (1991) agrees, stating that observations are "...potentially the richest source of information, yet the most elusive to recording" (p. 25).

The purpose of the observation influences what is observed and recorded, and how that information is used according to Evertson and Green (1986). The observer as separate from the environment, or the observer as a participant in the setting is discussed in Ways of Assessing Children and Curriculum (1992), edited by Celia Genishi. It is difficult to separate the observer from the surroundings. In the case of many CDA advisors, the focus was on the interpretation of what is observed

rather than a statement of what actually was observed relevant to the assignment or competency.

A decreased acceptance of standardized tests as valid forms of assessment has placed increased emphasis on alternative assessment as described by Lamme and Hysmith (1991) in an article on portfolio-based assessment. Among alternative assessment proposals is the trend to record observations as a method of gathering evaluation information. This emphasis has highlighted the need for training in observation techniques (Barry, 1987).

Anecdotal records and event samples are the two techniques most often used when recording the observation of a CDA intern on the contract. Knowledge of the techniques of observation is an important skill for the CDA advisor (Greenough, 1993, p. 28). There are specific techniques for recording of anecdotal records and event samples described by authors who focus on observations (Almy & Genishi, 1979; Boehm & Weinburg, 1987; Cohen, Stern & Balahan, 1983; Hills, 1992; Rhodes & Nathenson-Meja, 1992).

Another important tool for the advisor is the knowledge of performance-based assessment and its relationship to a competency-based program. There appears to be renewed emphasis in educational circles on

assessment. Frequently used terms are alternative or authentic assessment. Authentic assessment involves the process as well as the product of making informed decisions regarding student learning, according to Stephanie Marshall in the foreword of A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment, (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992) recently published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The CDA training program is a competency-based program, and the assessments are most frequently done in the context of the teaching/caregiving setting. According to Willis (1992), "Assessments should include challenging tasks without obvious solutions..."(p. 7). Each early childhood education course at the community college is supported by the use of a module. The module provides suggested activities to meet the objectives of the course of study. Often the interns present their own ideas for activities or ways to show competency. At times the interns will extend the activities or focus on only a few of the goals but reach competency through expansion or assimilation of the process. Advisors facilitate the educational process of interns by having informed knowledge of competency-based assessment.

Another term frequently used in connections with alternative assessment is mastery learning. Genishi

(1992) suggested that the use of "...mastery systems provides immediate feedback..." (p. 13). Immediate feedback was intended by the use of the intern contract. The intern and the advisor sign the contract at the end of the session together. The advisor may take on the role of coach in this scenario, providing not only a description of what transpired but a topic for reflection and discussion. Providing feedback to interns needs to be accomplished sensitively in that people have different styles of learning, processing and reflecting on information (Gardner, 1991). Skill development in supplying feedback is essential to advisor training.

De Fina (1992) observed that performance-based assessment allows for learner participation. Conference time with the intern provides opportunities for learner participation. There was no evidence that learner participation had been a topic of discussion during staff development for advisors.

Berman and Friederwitzer (1985) suggested that there has been a decrease in monetary funds for staff development. That was certainly the case in the community college. Advisors rallied for increased wages and were minimally successful. The result of the salary increase was a decrease in funds for staff development.

Reduced monetary funds for staff development, a work setting that required evaluation of competencies, and increased emphasis on performance-based assessment built a platform of concern for the advisor attempting to evaluate the competencies of an intern. Topics reviewed for greater understanding of this problem were connected to staff development, training in observation techniques, the use of the recording of observations as a form of assessment, and authentic or performance-based assessment.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and expected outcomes were projected: (a) CDA advisors would become familiar with observation techniques as an assessment component in a competency-based program, (b) advisors would become familiar with performance-based assessment, (c) increased knowledge of observation techniques and performance-based assessment would guide the advisors to increase the use of recorded observations.

Expected Outcomes

A review by the CDA program manager of over 6,000 contracts returned to the CDA program in 1991-92 revealed that less than 2,000 of the contracts had any form of recorded observations. It was expected at the completion of implementation, the number of contracts returned to

the CDA training program with recorded observations would increase from less than 2,000 to 3,000 contracts.

During a regional staff development meeting in 1992, CDA advisors discussed the need for a program of staff development in observation techniques. It was decided by the training manager and the writer that a proposal would be submitted as a potential practicum project to provide staff development for CDA advisors. It was proposed to provide a program of staff development in the area of observations techniques related to the CDA training program.

An interview with the manager of the CDA training program indicated that several of the cadre of nearly 70 CDA advisors did not attend a formal preservice orientation program and did not receive orientation specific to techniques of observations. All newly-hired advisors would receive information regarding observation techniques that were appropriate to the recording of adult competency during the implementation of this practicum. Information would be available in oral or written form depending on the circumstances of the individual advisor.

The writer had not recorded observations of competency in 25 of her own 32 contracts submitted to the training program from September through December of 1992.

During the implementation from March through the end of November 1993, it was expected that the writer would write approximately 80 contracts. Recorded observations would be submitted on 60 of the contracts.

Measurement of Outcomes

The criteria for an effective evaluation component, according to Orlich (1989) will "...lead to better decision making" (p. 370). The choice of an effective evaluation model supports a high quality program. The CDA training program at the community college had been in place for a number of years and is considered a quality program. The CIPP model designed by Daniel Stufflebeam (1983) supported a successful evaluation of the training program. The CIPP model has four major components with which to evaluate a program or process.

These CIPP components are context, input, process and product. According to Orlich (1989), Stufflebeam suggests that the "...context evaluation is conducted at the activity site..." to allow for gathering information about "needs, problems and objectives" (p. 370). The context of the problem had been discussed with CDA advisors and the program manager. Information regarding the context was also ascertained by gathering information regarding the system in which the advisors work. A

survey was designed to be distributed and collected during the yearly meeting. The context was surveyed by an instrument developed by the writer (see Appendix B).

Input had been gathered by a review of literature for possible strategies or solutions to the problem. A comprehensive view of the logistics of the program was essential as input. The components of a solution strategy were reviewed and discussed at a meeting of area coordinators for further input. Several discussions were held with the training manager to receive input throughout implementation.

The process evaluation component included informal feedback after the first and final preservice orientation and after each of the five staff development programs. The writer and the training manager reviewed the proceedings for a continuity of approach to the staff development meetings throughout the service area. Feedback from the orientation meetings and the staff development meetings supplied information for the revising of the advisor handbook.

The final evaluation component in the Stufflebeam model included product evaluation (Orlich, 1989). It was the intent of the solution strategy to increase the number of contracts returned to the training program with recorded observations of performance-based assessment, to

provide a program of staff development to CDA advisors, to increase the writer's recorded observations on intern contracts, and to provide updated material for the CDA advisors handbook. The writer would show an increase in the number of her contracts written during implementation with recorded observations. A lesson plan would be developed as part of the problem solving process. An updated section of the CDA handbook would cover performance-based assessment and the recording of information to show competency in early childhood education.

Orlich's (1989) interpretation of the final evaluation component is that the evaluator(s) decide whether or not to continue the process, change the process, or "terminate" the process. Whatever the case, the CIPP model promises to be effective when an evaluation is being made of a process.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

CDA advisors in the community college training program needed to increase the number of recorded observations documenting competency on the intern contract form. This increase in recorded observations would enhance the credibility of the training program. Feedback to the intern would increase. Advisors would be seen as effectively fulfilling their role as adjunct instructors of the community college. The community college program would be seen as doing its job by providing a record of competency-based assessment.

Solutions suggested by the literature for staff development suggested the use of project consultants, video tapes, checklists, and modeling of enthusiasm for professional growth. Staff development is a field rampant with ideas for providing learning experiences to

employees. The writer primarily focused on literature related to the field of education.

Brooks (1984) chose to look at a need for staff development from a constructivist point of view. Simply stated, a constructivist point of view would have learners constructing and organizing their own unique reality. A possible solution was for an advisor to have a peer coach or a mentor to provide feedback regarding the use of recorded observations. Brooks mentioned peer teaming. The writer interpreted that to mean that an area coordinator or a more experienced advisor could provide feedback to an advisor needing to increase recorded observations. Except in selected incidents, to provide a peer coach would have been very expensive and time consuming. The advisors may elect to help one another on a one-to-one basis if they live in an area where there are several advisors. However, many advisors live in isolated regions of the state.

Videotaping had been suggested by the literature. The scenario would have the advisor videotaping the intern, followed by recording of the observation. A review of the videotape and the recorded observation was recommended as a form of peer coaching by Rogers (1987) and Boehm and Weinburg (1987). The writer attempted to videotape a center in an early childhood classroom in

1991. It was to be used with teachers in developing observation skills in 1992. The attempt produced a lot of footage but very little that could be utilized in a training program on observation skill development. Distraction of noise and body movement prevented optimal taping although the camera was fixed on a tripod.

Being a consumer of technology, the writer proposed that a system of telecommunications as an interactive communication process could support growth in completing the assessment of a student's competency. Being able to dialogue on-line with advisors having difficulty understanding and implementing the components of performance-based-assessment would support the learning style of an advisor with visual memory.
Electronic mail communication with peers would support the learning process when questions would be answered and suggestions made regarding a puzzling advisor-advisee situation. However, this form of staff support was considered very costly and out of the range of the community college budget at this time.

Provision of a large group inservice for advisors in various areas served by the training program would provide an opportunity for advisors to meet. These meetings or inservices would include role playing, small group discussions of problem solving, practice in

contract writing, review of performance-based assessment and other growth opportunities for the advisors. Since advisors were paid according to the number of credits that were registered by their interns, many chose to work full-time with interns. As a result, many advisors criticized the staff development program for requesting unpaid sessions for staff development nine times a year.

Individuals struggling to record observations could be encouraged to work with the writer. The writer had developed programs of staff development to encourage the writing of narratives from the recorded observations by classroom teachers. To provide this resource to other advisors would be providing a peer coach, considered by research to be a viable component of a comprehensive program of staff development. As previously stated, time was very limited for one-to-one interaction with other advisors.

Description of Selected Solution

The solution selected for this problem was a combination of formal and informal staff development as recommended by Rogus (1983). A program of staff development was planned and implemented to increase the use of recorded observations as an assessment component in a competency-based program.

CDA advisors were encouraged to present what they determined to be their needs for a program of staff development in the use of observation techniques and performance-based assessment. This component capitalized on the context evaluation process of the CIPP model. Combs (1982) stated that learning is a very personal process as well as being subjective. Advisors indicated on the survey that they were confident in knowledge and use of observations techniques. The lack of recorded observations exhibiting competency provided scant evidence of knowledge or implementation of performance-based assessment. This scenario presented an challenging context for staff development.

The staff development plan was designed using input from theory and practice. Covey (1990), writing about leadership, noted that the aim "...of any human resource development program ought to release the tremendous creative power and potential..."of the participants with their involvement in the process (p. 70).

According to the literature, a model plan for staff development incorporated a presentation of theory, demonstration, and guided practice with feedback and coaching (Caldwell, 1985; Lambert, 1989; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987)). The staff development model for the advisor program took into

account the context within which it operated, coming as close to a model plan as possible.

The writer developed a plan of staff development in the recording of observations in the competency-based program. The personalized informal process occurred during scheduled meetings with CDA advisors. The writer arranged to accompany the program manager to five meetings with CDA advisors. The writer fulfilled the role of peer mentor during informal sharing of theory and practice regarding performance-based assessment and recording of observations

The writer developed a formal plan for new staff preservice orientation after reflection on the informal sessions and feedback received during those occasions. A set of orientation goals were established (Appendix C).

The formal aspect of staff development provided the training program with a one hour lesson plan to be implemented during the preservice for new advisors in the 1993-94 school year (see Appendix D). The writer implemented the initial utilization of the lesson plan at a full day orientation for new advisors.

The community college provides a staff handbook to all CDA advisors. The program manager requested that a revision be made to the handbook based on information gathered during implementation in order to support the

advisors in competency-based assessment. A draft of the revision was presented to the training manager prior to the first preservice for new CDA advisors during implementation.

Report of Action Taken

Prior to implementation, a survey form had been distributed to CDA advisors at a statewide advisor conference. This survey was designed to learn from advisors their educational level, the types of settings in which they worked, whether or not they had training in observation techniques, whether or not they had guided practice in observation techniques, familiarity with performance-based assessment, confidence level in observing CDA interns, and if there was something they were particularly interested in learning about observation techniques. The writer tabulated the results and shared them with the CDA training manager. There appeared to be a high degree of confidence by the CDA advisors in the use of observation techniques.

The survey had provided information regarding the level of education of the nearly 50 CDA advisors, but it did not reveal how CDA advisors were chosen. A telephone call to the training manager suggested that advisors were chosen for their education, experience, and positive

attitude. It was suggested that people were chosen who could deal with flexibility, inconsistency of income, and were interested in working within an individualized delivery system.

The writer shared the results of the survey with an educational evaluator to come to some understanding of the results of the survey versus the lack of recorded observations on the intern contracts. The evaluator suggested that the results of the survey might be overrated due to "observer bias" or a need to look good in order to preserve the feeling that the person was "doing the job." A low rank would, perhaps, suggest that the advisor had not been doing the job the advisor had been hired to do by the community college.

The writer reviewed 1,010 contracts submitted to the training office during the first month of implementation of the selected solution strategy. The advisor had been told that during the previous training year possibly only 2,000 of a potential 6,000 were returned with recorded observations. A review of the contracts revealed a pattern of consistently recorded observations. During the month reviewed, advisors returned 771 contracts with recorded observations on the 1,010 contracts they had written and turned in to the training program.

A discussion was held with writer and the training manager to ascertain the role of recorded observations in the training program. (A few CDA advisors had indicated to the writer that the observations were primarily a form of communication and not necessarily a recording of early childhood education competencies.) The training manager said that the role of the observations was to provide credibility and integrity to the program and to verify competency.

Research and reading in the areas of alternative assessment, performance-based assessment, adult education, staff development, and learning styles laid a foundation for a multi-level approach to providing staff development to CDA advisors. A multi-faceted approach was used to ensure continued practice in the use of refined observation techniques. One of the approaches was the provision of thought provoking questions to stimulate discussion and reflection by the advisors. The sharing encouraged a higher level of understanding in use of observations as a tool to show competency in early childhood education.

The writer conferred with the training manager, area coordinators, and an executive director of staff development of a school district to prepare four questions to share with CDA advisors at staff development

meetings. The questions were developed to provide a form of self-evaluation by each advisor for analyzing completed contracts prior to the contact being signed by the intern and the advisor. The four questions were designed to allow for reflection by each advisor in order to provide for a substantive recorded observation. The four questions were: (1) Did the intern have items to support competency? (2) How did what the intern shared support competency? (3) Does the recorded observation substantiate the competency? (4) What feedback supports the intern's growth as a professional?

The lesson plan for staff development was designed for meetings with CDA advisors. The program allowed for an informal welcome with participants. Introductions were made by the advisors based on names, settings, and educational level. A question was posed as to what experience the advisors had with performance-based assessment and what their definition of that would be prior to the staff development. This personally involved every advisor as well as the training manager at the beginning of the meeting.

The introductory portion of the staff development meeting continued as the writer gave a brief self-introduction. The writer shared with the participants how the topic of competency-based or performance-based

assessment had been derived for staff development. The lesson plan continued to promote reflection and self-analysis, as the writer shared the personal questions that had initiated the focus on competency-based assessment. These personal questions had been formulated by the reflections of the writer regarding her perceived need to do a better job in recording competency on an intern contract.

The next portion of the staff development plan shared with each advisor was the use of selected quotations from a Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment by Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters (1992). The quotations were presented in written form for the advisors immediate reflection and discussion. The verbal reflection component involved each advisor selecting a favorite statement from the quotations, and sharing with the other advisors as to why it seemed relevant. After this sharing, the point was made succinctly that the recording of observations on the intern contract needed to reflect competencies. The competencies needed to relate to the goals stated in the early childhood education modules used in the CDA training program. The modules are the textbooks used by the training program.

A final aspect of the plan included the provision of the four questions the advisors would ask themselves as

they did the recording of the observation on the contract. The four questions were reproduced on 3x5 note cards to allow for the advisors to carry the cards to meetings with the interns.

The distribution of quotations from Growing Teachers: Partnerships in Staff Development by Jones (1993) was one of the final components of the staff development program. The quotations were selected to be supportive of the role of the advisors. The advisors were then asked if they would practice using the four suggested questions previously mentioned.

To provide closure to the meeting, the advisors were asked to share personal learnings regarding the staff development session. Each advisor, as well as the training manager, shared personal reflections of the staff development program for that day regarding competency-based assessment in the CDA training program. The writer encouraged the participants to continue in their role as the key to the entire CDA training program in the community college service area. Time was allowed for informal gathering and questions before the writer and the training manager left to travel back to the community college.

The first staff development meeting was held in a metropolitan area, a two and one-half hour drive from the

writer's home. It was held early in the morning and the participants were actively involved and thoughtful.

The second staff development was later that same day in a different location in the same city. The participants were primarily advisors to Head Start programs and family child care providers. The discussions were thoughtful and reflective.

The third staff development was held on the campus of the community college later during implementation. The advisors came from more rural settings and had further distances to drive to get to the meeting. They were enthusiastic and receptive to the ideas presented.

The fourth staff development was held 234 miles from the writer's home. It was held in the northern part of the state. All the advisors and guests at that inservice traveled nearly an hour to reach the small town where the inservice was held. The advisors came from distances further north and west of the town. The town was selected by an area coordinator for its central location in the area. The setting was very informal and everyone participated actively in the discussions.

The fifth and final staff development for advisors was held about four weeks after the previous meeting. This one was held on a college campus about 270 miles from the home of the writer. The participants were

actively involved in a variety of early childhood care settings. They were interested in enhancing the recorded observations. They seemed to be pleased to have the guidelines in the form of the four questions to ask themselves as they completed the contract with the interns.

During the times between the staff development meetings the writer was continuing to advise a large group of interns in a city in the southern part of the state. Careful reflection and concentrated effort to provide a recorded observation that would be meaningful to the intern and the program provided for 53 contracts of the 80 written to have competency-based recordings. The contracts written without a recorded observation of competency were done because either it was the first meeting with the intern or the intern was unavailable for an observation.

The writer produced a revised segment for the CDA advisor handbook (see Appendix E). This was shared in its draft form with the training manager. A revised form will be added to the new handbooks for CDA advisors.

New advisors regularly join the CDA training program. It is a requirement that they attend a preservice orientation prior to making a commitment to the training program. The writer assisted in the

preservice orientation, providing the same form of staff development as was provided to the seasoned advisors. Feedback from the potential new advisors was very positive.

The intent of the implementation was to provide staff development for CDA advisors throughout the state, to increase the number of contracts written by the writer with recorded observations, to provide a new segment regarding competency-based recorded observations for the advisor handbook, and to show an increase in the number of recorded observations by the advisors during the period of implementation.

The writer frequently reviewed the components of the evaluation procedure and progress during the implementation process. Continually reviewing content, input, process and product assisted in keeping the implementation focused. The CIPP method of evaluation is a process. Utilizing a process as a method of evaluation kept the writer focused on the four components of the implementation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The challenge facing the CDA training program and the individual advisors was to more fully utilize written observations to record the competency of interns in an early childhood education program. The advisors had a wide variety of educational backgrounds and years of experience in the field of CDA advising. The service area for the training program was spread over two-thirds of a large, southwestern state. Monetary funds for travel and staff development were limited. The program had only one training manager organizing a program for 1,200 students with nearly 70 advisors. These advisors were certificated community college adjunct instructors.

The selected solution was to provide a systematic form of staff development throughout the state, and to provide for preservice orientation for all new advisors. The staff development and the preservice orientation would focus on performance-based assessment. Updated

material would be added to the CDA advisor handbook for future CDA advisors.

An expected outcome of the practicum was that at least 3,000 CDA intern contracts would be returned to the CDA training program during the period of implementation with recorded observations. It had been assumed by the CDA training manager that there were very few intern contracts being returned with recorded observations. A review of 1,010 contracts during the first month of implementation indicated that the return of contracts with recorded observations was much higher than the training manager had perhaps realized. The CDA advisors had returned 771 contracts with recorded observations during the first month of implementation. In the final month of implementation, the writer reviewed 746 contracts. Advisors had recorded observations on 481 of the contracts submitted to the training office during that time.

The writer and the training manager discussed the differences between the perceived need for additional recorded observations and the results of the careful reading of contracts. The positive number of recorded observations was a pleasant revelation for the training program.

The second expected outcome was that CDA advisors would receive staff development regarding the techniques of observations. The program of staff development in observation techniques was presented as a component of competency-based, performance-based assessment. The staff development was designed to facilitate and strengthen the use of recorded observations as a component of competency-based assessment. The advisors attended meetings with an emphasis on the recording of competencies and the use of performance-based assessment in the CDA training program. This program of staff development was carried out in five cities across the state.

All potential new advisors were to receive information regarding observation techniques that were appropriate to the recording of adult competency during the implementation period. Emphasis was placed on preservice orientation during the time of implementation. The writer attended and presented to a preservice orientation in the middle of implementation and at the very end of implementation. The day-long preservice included information on all aspects of CDA training. The preservice was facilitated by the training manager, an area coordinator and the writer. The difference between these two preservice orientations and previous

orientations was the involvement of the new advisors into a reflective discussion of a definition of competency and the renewed vision of performance-based assessment.

The fourth and final objective was that the writer would record observations on 60 contracts she would write during the period of implementation. It was expected that during the implementation time the writer would write approximately 80 contracts. The hope was that 60 of the submitted contracts would have recorded observations. Careful processing of the contracts revealed the difficulty of always being able to record observations that would substantiate competency. The initial visit by the advisor is often to register the intern, thus no recorded observation is necessary or even conducive to the process. During implementation the writer delivered 80 contracts to the training program. The writer increased the number of recorded observations. In the four months prior to implementation the writer had recorded observations of competency on 7 of the 32 contracts written. During implementation there were 53 recorded observations of competency on the 80 contracts written. The numbers of recorded observations increased from 21% to 66% during implementation. The contracts without recorded observations of competency indicated a phone contact, registration, or a change of plans by the

intern of the scheduled meeting time, all of which needs to be documented according to the training program guidelines.

Discussion

Trends in the education scene for alternatives to standardized assessment places emphasis on performance-based assessment, competency-based assessment and portfolio development. The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition has required the development of a portfolio or a resource file as part of the evaluation for the CDA Credential for many years. The CDA training program utilizes modules that list objectives and activities with which to meet those objectives. The CDA advisors in the training program claimed to have expertise in the use of observations. There were 48 respondents to the writer's survey; 18 of the advisors related that they would appreciate additional training in general observation techniques while 11 of the advisors wished for updated information on observation techniques and trends in performance-based assessment.

The challenge was for the advisors to go beyond a recording of the visit by writing in the contract space provided, "You did a great job today." or "Jane sat with Timothy." What was difficult to ascertain was whether or not the intern had achieved competency in the specific

content area of CDA training they were currently working on with an advisor. Advisors shared that they tried to record something positive whether it related to the current area of study or not. At times, the intern may have been given a grade with no indication on the intern contract that they had reached a level of competency.

In each of the staff development sessions, the advisors commented that they would like to see the intern contract reformatted to allow more space to record competency. They indicated that they would like to see the words "competency-based/performance-based assessment" on the contract instead of only the word "observation" (see Appendix F).

The writer initiated discussion into the area of competency. At times there was disagreement between seasoned advisors regarding recorded observations. Throughout the process the training manager supported the enhancement of the recording of observations to support competency. The dilemma for the advisors seemed to be over whether or not the important factor was to provide support and education to adults (interns) caring for children regardless of the educational ability and expertise of the interns or to support a grading system with a recording of competency.

The training manager agreed that it was a dilemma. However, she strongly encouraged all advisors, new and experienced, to be aware of the competencies as suggested by the objectives in the training modules. During advisor meetings and preservice orientations, she urged each advisor to make use of the four formulated questions (developed during implementation by the writer) in order to self-monitor the writing of the contracts. This system of self-monitoring would support the intern as a growing professional. Recording observed competencies would then support competency-based assessment as well as the grading system.

The disequilibrium furnished by the discussions during the staff development presented an opportunity for thoughtful reflection. The results of the reflection provided by the discussions with advisors all over the state has provided fertile ground for new processes in the training program.

Something that is difficult to name but that was very evident at each staff development session and preservice orientation was what appeared to be contemplative appreciation for being treated like a professional with an opportunity for reflection and discussion in a professional setting. The advisors were thoughtful in their communication as they shared personal

definitions of performance-based assessment as well as selections of definitions from the statements provided for their use from A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992).

The training manager was involved throughout the process. She was carefully and thoughtfully reflective from the inception of the idea of doing a statewide staff development through the writing of the report. The writer and the training manager were like shadows at staff development meetings, leaving no stones unturned in the quest to better understand the assessment process in a competency-based program. At the completion of the writing of the report, she said that the project had revitalized a process by which the program could continue to make changes. She continued to express that changes had been implemented before in the program's twenty year history, but that the approach this time produced an in-depth, cognitive, and sophisticated consideration of change. She indicated that the practicum had its value in the revitalization of a process.

Challenging discussions will undoubtedly continue surrounding competencies and performance-based assessment in any field or profession. Discussions like those generated in this training program of early childhood education are not unknown to the Council for Early

Childhood Professional Recognition. In 1992, the organization inaugurated a National Institute for Professional Development. The second annual institute was held in Minneapolis in 1993. The writer attended both of these institutes to engage in conversation and to network with educators facing the need to define a profession and a field of early childhood education.

The objectives were met though they were changed slightly in the process. The objective of a problem-solving practicum is a process--the process of selecting a problem, suggesting a solution and looking toward the solution to the problem. In this case, the problem had a slightly different emphasis once it was more carefully analyzed. However, the training program had a clearer objective for staff development when the process was complete.

Recommendations

The community college training program has been provided with a number of challenges. The philosophy of the college and the training program needs to be clearly communicated. The population targeted by the training program needs to be clearly defined. There is a need to revamp portions of the advisor handbook. The training program needs to provide a formalized program of staff development for the diverse population of CDA advisors.

The current intern contract needs to be revised to incorporate the language of competency-based and performance-based assessment.

Dissemination

The practicum was shared throughout the implementation period as the introduction to the formalized staff development. Many advisors admitted that they had concerns about the recording of the observations. The advisors indicated that they were grateful for the opportunity to think about their work. They affirmed a program of staff development related to trends in their profession from a national perspective.

Further dissemination of work of the practicum may be seen in a revised section of the community college handbook for CDA advisors. The program manager and the writer have been collaborating on the rewriting of the section. The work that was completed during implementation will continue as new advisors are given a preservice orientation and are hired as advisors.

While presenting staff development at one of the very distant sites from the community college, an area coordinator video-taped the presentation and discussion. She is circulating the tape to advisors who could not attend the meeting. She will share the tape with new advisors. She is sending the tape to the writer to

preview. While the writer found video-taping not to be a solution, the area coordinator felt it was an excellent way for all area advisors to get the same information. The writer spoke with two of the people who had staff development via the tape. They said they felt it was very helpful.

The writer plans to submit an article to the CDA newsletter COMPETENCE regarding the process of training new Child Development Associate (CDA) advisors and staff development for practicing CDA advisors.

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APPENDIX A

INDIVIDUAL INTERN CONTRACT

CDA TRAINING PROGRAM
Individual Intern Contract

Course #	Final Grade	Date

INTERN _____ ADVISOR _____ DATE OF VISIT _____

Last visit

Intern planned to:

Today

Observations:

Amount of Observation Time:

For next visit

Plans - Intern will:

Amount of Conference Time:

Advisor will:

64

Intern's Signature _____ Advisor's Signature _____

Distribution: White - Intern Canary - CDA Pink - Advisor

APPENDIX B

CDA ADVISOR SURVEY

CDA Advisor Survey

1. Name_____

2. Address_____
   Street Town County Zip

3. Last four digits of SS# _____

4. Last level of education acquired. (**check**)
   ____GED ____Bachelor's Degree
   ____High School ____Master's Degree
   ____AA Degree ____Post Master's academic work
   ____CDA Credential

5. Identify the types of setting in which you are an advisor:

   a._____ b._____

   c._____ d._____

   e._____ f._____

6. Have you been trained in observation techniques?
   Yes___ No___ If you answered "yes"

   Where_____

   When _____

7. Have you had guided practice in observation techniques?
   Yes___ No___ If you answered "yes"

   Where_____

   When _____

8. Are you familiar with performance based assessment?
   Yes____ No____

9. Describe your confidence level in observing CDA interns. Circle number on scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High

10. What would you like to learn about observation techniques and/or performance based assessment? Answer below and on the back if necessary. Thank You.

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APPENDIX C

ORIENTATION GOALS

ORIENTATION GOALS

At the completion of this training the participants will:

1. Be familiar with the philosophy and development of this competency-based model of CDA training.

2. Have an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Directors, Advisors, and Interns in relation to CDA training.

3. Be able to use the recording tools and other resources to deliver on-site, modular-based CDA training in an observations/conference format.

4. Be able to use a resource file as an integral part of the CDA training process.

5. Be familiar with the general steps involved in the CDA Credentialing process.

6. Be clearly aware of the specific steps to follow when initating the CDA training process.

APPENDIX D

PRESERVICE ORIENTATION LESSON PLAN

1,2,3, Competency

Preservice Orientation Lesson Plan

Distribute blank copies of observation form(contracts)

Informal greeting: Check for good eye contact, room arrangement, etc.

Formal welcome.

Self introduction of participants following these guidelines.
1. Participants tell name and educational background
2. Participants define potential settings and age groups where they will do advising
3. Participants share understanding of performance based assessment.

[Self introduction by writer]
A bit about NOVA and the practicum process.

[Relevance and overview]
Discussion of how the question was raised regarding performance based assessment and competencies.

Discussion of results of advisor survey.

Personal sharing regarding search for answers regarding grading of CDA interns on competency.

Share quotations from A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment
Allow time for reading and individual reflection
Ask each person to read a portion that means something to them and tell why it has meaning.

MAJOR POINTS
A. Performance based-assessment/competency-based assessment

B. Four Questions
Introduce and distribute the cards with the four questions written on the. Discuss the four questions.

1. Did the intern have items to support the competency?
   What was brought to share; i.e. games, lesson plans, completed projects?
2. How did what the intern share support the competency?
3. Does the recorded observations substantiate the competency?
4. What feedback supports the intern's growth as a professional.

Role play the intern role utilizing a training module. Share competencies with the "advisors" utilizing nearly all the goals and objectives in one training module.
Ask for questions.

[Bridging]
Follow-up with advisors being **key** to the entire program.

Distribute "Quotes to Live By" taken from Growing Teachers: Partnerships in Staff Development.

[Summary]
1. Try to completely utilize the contract, record the name of the module being studied, the activities the intern is working on, and the competencies exhibited by the intern.

2. Clarify the next assignment with the intern and support them in their growth as early childhood education professionals.

Turn it over to Training Manager for follow-up and closure.

APPENDIX E

REVISION TO CDA ADVISOR HANDBOOK

REVISION TO CDA ADVISOR HANDBOOK

CONTRACTS

1. Document everything on Intern Contracts and/or On-Site Visit Reports.

2. Make notes about what you see during your visit, paying particular attention to those activities which relate the plans from the last visit. (These will be related to the current module/competency).

3. As you are recording your observations, ask yourself the following four questions. Record the answers as a part of the observations to show that the intern is achieving or has achieved competency.

   a. Did the intern have items to support the competency? **What** was brought to share; i.e. games, lesson plans, completed projects?

   b. **How** did what the intern shared support the competency?

   c. Does the recorded observation **substantiate** the competency?

   d. What **feedback** supports the interns growth as a professional?

4. Be specific on Intern Contracts. Recount specific observations you make to support a suggestion you make or a recommendation.

5. Put on contract all items loaned to Interns.

6. Speak directly to the Intern on an Intern Contract. A statement should read, "Jo Ann, playing a quick game of 'Simon Says' when lunch was late was a great transition idea", rather than "The Intern played a quick game of 'Simon Says'..."

7. Leave an Intern Contract even when Intern is absent for documentation purposes.

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL INTERN CONTRACT GUIDE

Individual Intern Contract Guide

Course #	Final Grade	Date

INTERN _____ ADVISOR _____ DATE OF VISIT

Last Visit

Intern planned to:
assignment from "Plans - Intern will :" on previous contract (includes titles of courses in progress)

Today

Competency-based/ Performance-based Assessment

Observations:

1. Did the intern have items to support the competency? What was brought to share: i. e. games, lesson plans, completed projects.
2. How did what the intern shared support the competency?
3. Does the recorded observations substantiate the competency?
4. What feedback supports the intern's growth as a professional?

(also include reference to CDA Credentialing competencies and functional areas)

Amount of Observation Time 30 minutes or more

For Next Visit

Plans - Intern will:

assignment (be specific; include titles of courses in progress)

Amount of Conference Time 30 minutes of more

Advisor will: date of next visit, any reminders concerning resources, etc.

_____ _____

Intern's Signature Advisor's Signature

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